

by Bob Saydlowski, Jr.

Bass Drum Trigger Pedals

In the majority of electronic drumkits, the bass drum is a large pad in the center of the setup. Its size is mainly for cosmetic appeal, since the pickup sensor inside is quite small in comparison to the overall pad size. However, Drum Workshop, Techtonics, and Magnesium Guitars all offer devices with which electronic equipment may be triggered by a drummer's foot without the use of any drumpad of any size.

Drum Workshop EP-1



The *EP-1* is a modified 5000 *Turbo* pedal, with the beater striking downward. The pedal itself has a hinged heel footboard, a single expansion spring, and a half sprocket with chain drive. The entire pedal is mounted onto a metal support plate that is rubberized on the mount side and Velcroed on the floor side. The support plate has two sprung spurs for even better stabilization. (Keep in mind that the pedal is not attached to any sort of anchor, such as a bass drum hoop, so any skating would definitely cause problems!)

Mounted on the support plate—in front of the pedal—is a cylindrical detonator with a rubber impact surface. Set at an upward angle, this detonator is what the beater makes contact with to trigger the sound. (The *EP-1* does not have its own sound source; it must be hooked to an external device such as a Simmons brain, Linn 9000, etc.) Next to the detonator is a small casing, containing two 1/4" output jacks. These enable two sound sources to be triggered simultaneously, and will also allow you to link two *EP-1*s together for double bass drum playing. You can, of course, connect either one singly to your electronic brain or drum computer.

There are lots of options for your setup with the *EP-1*. You can add an electronic bass drum into your acoustic kit, while taking up only the space required for a drum pedal. With a full electronic kit, you could completely do away with the large bass drum pad and "open up" your setup visually. Of course, you are not limited to just bass drum sounds with the *EP-1*. The pedal can be used to trigger any available voice in your drum brain or computer (snare, handclaps, sound effects, etc.).

The *EP-1* has a very natural feel and rebound. In fact, it's just like playing a real bass drum. I preferred the *EP-1* over a Simmons pad on the basis of feel alone. The *EP-1*'s attack is also quieter than an electronic pad. Its compactness allows it to fit in comfortably with any setup. I'll never play on an electronic bass drum pad again! The retail price is \$298.00.

Techtonics 2000



The Techtonics 2000 is an electronic

bass drum trigger designed along the same lines as the DW *EP-1*, but minus the pedal, allowing you to use your own present drum pedal. Its steel mount plate is 16" long and 7" wide, so almost any pedal will fit. The plate is covered with non-skid, ribbed rubber. At the front of the plate is a cylindrical cushion-base detonator, along with one 1/4" jack and one XLR jack. The jacks are both input and output, enabling two 2000s to be linked together. The Techtonics can only be used with drum pedals whose beaters can be positioned downward. The cylinder is horizontally adjustable to line up with your pedal's beater. The mount plate has adjustable clamps: One is used for the pedal to clamp onto, and the other to hold the pedal down to the mount plate.

I tried the Techtonics 2000 with an old-style DW 5000C, and aside from having to readjust the axle hub for the beater, no further adjustments to the pedal were needed. Setup, in fact, is very simple. The trigger cylinder has a bit of "give" to it. Thus, feel and rebound were quite good. If you like your present pedal and like the concept of being able to trigger electronic sounds with a compact unit, I recommend checking out the Techtonics 2000. The retail price is \$120.00.

The Shark



The *Shark* is a radical new design in drum triggers, incorporating a black, linear-transit, cam-operated pedal, with a hinged footboard plus toe stop, all made completely of steel. A steel transit block, when depressed by the pedal footboard, strikes a transducer at the front of the frame, enabling triggering of almost any electronic drum voice module. The transit block is spring-carried, hooks to a movable anchor post on the base plate, and has a front rubber bumper where it strikes the transducer. Different springs can be used to alter the stiffness of the pedal action. Since the transit block rides on two steel rods, its weight provides inertia for smooth movement and a realistic feel. The footboard angle can be adjusted by changing the position of both the cam follower underneath the footplate and the hinge block at the end of the footplate. The toe stop plate is also removable. To stabilize movement of the pedal on carpeted sur-

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even able to lower the front crosspiece—completely loaded with drums and cymbals—with no difficulty; each side could be loosened and lowered without collapsing completely. Both the *J4* clamps and the pipe-to-pipe clamps feature large tightening handles that make it easy to tighten or loosen the clamps, and provide plenty of leverage to get a secure grip.

Memory collars are provided for the pipe-to-pipe connections, which allows the main pipes of the rack to be set up the same way each time. It would be helpful if the same memory collars were included for each *J4*, to mark the positions of toms and cymbals. (If one went on the assumption that the *J4*s were not going to be removed from the rack upon breakdown, memory collars might not be necessary. But in the event of a very complicated setup, they might still be helpful to lock things into position.) Conspicuous by their absence from the equipment supplied with the *PMD 500 SS* are memory collars for the cymbal booms. These would mark both height and angle for the booms, which would make their placement much simpler and more secure. As it is, it's necessary to make some sort of mark on the shaft of the cymbal boom to correspond with a mark on the appropriate *J4* clamp in order to indicate the boom's position. The L-arms that support the rack toms are supplied with memory locks.

On The Gig

Once I got my setup arrangement finalized, I took my kit out on several gigs to field-test the *Power Tower* system. I did have certain reservations about its practicality for a drummer who isn't working on arena stages. I also had some doubts about the cylindrical nature of the pipe and the potential for rack toms slipping. I wanted to see how the rack would handle under the high-pressure, quick setup and breakdown that my band usually had to face: whether it would be more or less trouble than a full complement of regular stands, and whether it would take more or less time to erect.

I determined quickly that the rack was faster to set up than my regular stands had been: five minutes flat from box to setup, ready to mount drums and cymbals on. There's no getting around the fact that the component parts are bulky; after all, you're dealing with pipes over four feet long in some instances. But they aren't heavy, and you're only carrying a few of them to complete your setup, as opposed to (potentially) several heavy traditional stands. As long as you have a vehicle with the capability of carrying the rack's lengthy component parts, I'd say that setup and breakdown are certainly no more difficult than with any other stand

arrangement—and possibly much less so.

My fears about drums slipping were quickly allayed. When you figure the circumference of a 1 1/2" diameter pipe (approximately 5"), and multiply that times the width of the *J4* clamps (approximately 1/4"), you get a gripping area of around 8/4 square inches. That's quite a large surface. And the stainless-steel pipe that comprises the *Power Tower* rack has a satin—rather than smooth chrome—finish, which gives a bit of roughness to maximize grip security. I was able to mount a 12 x 14 rack tom at quite a distance away from the pipe and at a substantial angle without any slipping at all. While playing, I noticed that the drums and cymbals were all supported solidly; there was no "bounce" effect from one item to another. I have heard that this can occur with very heavy playing on any rack setup, but I saw no evidence of it on my gig.

Breakdown was as fast as the setup: Once the drums and cymbals were removed, the cymbal booms undamped quickly and were stowed away, and then the whole rack was broken down in five minutes. Total breakdown time was probably 20 minutes from the first turn of a wing nut to the last buckling of a case. I was impressed.

Let me point out that Tama is the first to admit that a rack system is not for everyone. It is not particularly recommended for sets smaller than five pieces, with at least three cymbals. It is also not recommended if you currently play only weddings or parties on very lightweight equipment using flat-base stands circa 1963. If that type of kit works well for you, you don't need a rack.

On the other hand, the more complicated your drumset is, the more valuable a rack system becomes, in terms of economy of space and weight. For instance, as I said earlier, I started this test using only the basic *PMD 500 SS*, mounting two rack toms and two cymbals. By the time I was through, I had mounted 9x10, 10x12, and 12 x 14 rack toms, four crash cymbals, and a cowbell on that same unit (using some additional clamps supplied by Tama). By adding the *PMD 50 SS* add-on unit, I was able to mount a ride cymbal, two more crash cymbals, and a small monitor speaker to my right. And the stage floor area taken up by the entire rack was less than that of my riser, which is only 5 1/2' by 5 1/2' square. Considering the area that would have been taken up by the bases of the required number of traditional tom and cymbal stands of today's size, I believe that my final setup would have been impossible to achieve without the use of the *Power Tower* rack.

For anyone interested in the convenience and security of a rack system, I'd



Tama's J4 clamp will accomodate virtually any brand of hardware.

definitely recommend the Tama *Power Tower* system as a candidate for examination. The *PMD 500 SS* unit currently lists at \$335.00, and includes four *J4* clamps, two L-arms for rack toms, and two long cymbal booms. The add-on *PMD 50 SS* unit lists for \$130.00. Additional clamps, booms, memory collars, etc., are available at extra cost.

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faces, Velcro pads are attached to its bottom. A leash is also provided to tie around your seat, anchoring the pedal when playing on smooth floors.

When I first received the *Shark* for testing, it had a problem in triggering certain units, due to a mismatch in voltage. This trouble has since been solved, and the *Shark* has faithfully triggered every module I've had the opportunity to try it on. The pedal gives a clean voltage pulse, with no double triggering. An XLR output jack is standard, but a W jack is available on request.

If you've wanted to add an electronic bass drum into your kit but don't have the room, the *Shark* would work out fine, as the space it takes up is just a bit more than the average conventional bass pedal. (Don't be confused into thinking that the *Shark* produces a bass drum sound itself; you still need a voice unit to connect it into.)

The *Shark* has seen a few design changes since its inception, and its inventor has now come up with a pedal that feels pretty close to a regular pedal. Your playing technique should not change much at all (even though I did find myself playing with my heel up more than usual). The *Shark* is quite an interesting design and concept, and should fit right in with electronic drumkit players, as well as being a space-saving add-on for all types of kits. The retail price is \$269.00.